

Rare Books

An Elizabeth Barrett Browning Find The Demand for Modern Fiction Where Booksellers Congregate

SOME lucky collector has recently turned up what is probably the rarest bit of the work of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

This is a poem, of fourteen verses, written at Rome April 4, 1861, and sent to Mr. James H. Stone of Baltimore on the death of one of his children. Mr. Stone had a few copies printed privately for distribution among his friends, under the statement, "a few copies which I have had thus prepared for a private circulation."

The poem is printed in broadside form, is in a fine state of preservation, and will be sold by Scott & O'Shaughnessy at their rooms on Nassau street March 26.

Browning collectors should make a note of this, as the catalogue states that no other copy is known.

Fiction—Sales of fiction are constantly increasing. A good deal of it is recent fiction in first editions.

A RARE BOOK SELLER'S NEST—In the building at 25 West Forty-second street there are seven dealers, all of whom carry large stocks; a rather unusual lot to find in one building.

Rare Book Shops in Groups.

BOOKSELLERS' ROWS—The gathering of rare book dealers in certain sections of the city has occasioned comment. On Fourth avenue from Astor place to Thirtieth street there are more than a dozen shops; on Fifty-ninth street between Madison and Lexington avenues there are eight; on 125th street there are half a dozen.

A few years ago while a few bookmen were in one of the auction rooms waiting for a sale to begin one dealer remarked that it would be a good thing for all the dealers in town to come together in one of the large buildings of the city, with the auction companies occupying space there. He contended that it would be both economical and convenient.

What Dealers Are Doing.

PERSONAL NOTES—Bill Gough has in preparation a catalogue of unusual pamphlets that he describes as "footnotes to American history."

Chris Gerhardt is about to issue a catalogue that will arouse much interest.

James F. Drake issued some time ago a catalogue of an uncommon sort; it listed 100 books all priced at \$100 apiece. He now wonders if a list of 1,000 books at \$1,500 each would be as successful; and how far he might go if he kept up the progression.

J. F. Sabin has left 22 Pine street and is now at 14 Maiden lane.

BOOKMEN IN THE SERVICE—Among those who are now wearing the uniform are Lieut. Marston Drake, Isadore Friedman, Ned Morris, Herman Popper, C. Salop and Frank Shea. Others who have done their bit are M. Slog and Frank Stuart. THE SUN will be glad to add to the list.

CATALOGUES RECEIVED—P. F. Madigan's, offering autograph letters of distinguished people.

The Clark Library.

SCOTT & O'SHAUGHNESSY, 116 Nassau street, March 26 and 27, Tuesday morning and afternoon and Wednesday morning, library of William B. Clark of Colorado Springs, 828 items.

This library contains a number of noticeable items, among others, a very old work on jewelry and gems, printed in 1695; an extremely rare poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 1861; what may be the first plate etched by George Cruikshank, at the top of the ballad *The Mulberry Tree*, done when the artist was but 16 years of age; some un-

known O. Henry items; the *Liberal Veritatis* of Claude Lorraine, with plates by Earlom; Nuremberg Chronicle in the original edition; a manuscript volume decorated with water colors, of James Whitcomb Riley; *On the Trail of Stevenson*, in the first issue, which was suppressed; *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, first edition; Whittier's *Moll Pitcher* in original wrappers, uncut, and the real first edition of Whittier's *Gentle Art of Making Enemies*.

Unwise Practices.

PERSONS WHO DESIRE rare books and who supply their lists of books desired to a number of dealers, with the result that all the dealers prosecute the search at the same time, do not seem to understand that any one dealer is as likely to find the book wanted as are a dozen. Nor do they perhaps understand that if they persist in the practice, of which dealers are sure to become cognizant, they are certain to be heartily disliked. Their future wants will receive scant attention from dealers.

IT IS ALWAYS DUE to those who make replies to published lists of books wanted that some acknowledgment of their replies be sent them. The replies to the advertiser represent much labor and time expended even if not immediately, to gather information which he is seeking.

Too MANY TWISTED and distorted titles are called for in published want lists, and for this there is generally no excuse. If a book man is not an authority on everything about books, including titles, what is he master of? It is a good rule to verify every title.

Let's Have the News.

FINDS—If you know of rare items that have been turned up, that's news. Send it to THE SUN, addressing *Books and the Book World*.

TRADE NEWS—THE SUN wants catalogues and any other matter in which bookmen are interested that we may be of service to dealers and buyers alike. Address *Books and the Book World*, THE SUN.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT—At a session of the Crimmins sale a photograph was made of the salesroom at the moment when the Douai Bible was being offered. The audience was asked to remain seated with faces turned to the stage, as in bidding. Nevertheless well known dealers were at pains to face the camera. Posterity will remember them as "among those present."

Replies to Questions.

R. D. COSTELLO—The book you ask about can be had in the stores of this city for \$1.

H. C. S.—The magazine can be had occasionally for \$2 a volume if in good condition. A set of four volumes sold some time ago for \$16; but you lack volumes 2 and 4. The Burr book can be bought for about \$4.

Please tell me the value of the *Annales of Cornelius Tacitus*, London, 1640; *Works of Shakespeare*, in six volumes, London, 1709.

The first mentioned book is worth about \$2, the set of Shakespeare \$6. The other book you ask about is of only ordinary value.

I have a book entitled *The Universal Gazetteer*, published in London, 1759. Has it any value?

The book is of little value, dealers selling it at about \$1.

Love and Fighting

ELBRIDGE GERRY ROBERTS calls his story, *A Naval Engagement*, "a marine narrative of love and war," and that is exactly what it is. It is placed in the time of the American civil war and details the adventures of Elisha Remsen from the time when, just under 21, he hastened from Scotland to New York at the news of the firing on Fort Sumter to that other time, some years later, when he and Mary Elsworth, the sea captain's daughter, embraced each other with respectful but ardent tenderness in a delightful garden.

The reader who will not be deterred by some imperfect English, occasional mispunctuation and unskillfulness on the part of the narrator, who is writing his first story, may get considerable pleasure out of this simple romance. There is no plot, but there are some picturesque glimpses of the war. Such bits as the description of the flight of the projectile from a fifteen inch gun are vivid and unusual; to many readers the account will seem incredible, but it is accurate enough, we feel sure.

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A Quartermaster's Amusing Book



"We had to accustom our mounts to The Band"

THE animated scene depicted above is a drawing from life no doubt, though not a "still life," made by Private Arthur V. Wing for the *Confessions of a Quartermaster*, by Captain (and Quartermaster) E. P. Wheatley. The

book is published in London by Thomas Murby & Co. When we opened it and saw the illustrations we reared with delight almost as high as the horses Private Wing pictures. Capt. Wheatley says his book was written to amuse a nurse on night duty. It ought to.

Romain Rolland and the Theatre

By BARRETT H. CLARK.

IN order to grasp the full significance of some of Romain Rolland's plays it is necessary to consider his interesting book, *The People's Theatre*.

Ever since the early '80s M. Rolland had been a staunch admirer and in some ways a disciple of Tolstoi. The young Frenchman, however, expressed his doubts to the Russian, and in 1887 Tolstoi wrote a long letter which was, according to one of M. Rolland's biographers, a sort of preliminary sketch for *What is Art?* And when that astounding book appeared, with its iconoclastic attacks on M. Rolland's idols, he was at first prone to disagree, but *The People's Theatre* is ample proof that "literature for the people" had sunk deep into the Frenchman's heart. This is Rolland's thesis: The theatre, in common with most modern art, is a whitened sepulchre, rotten to the core, affected, aristocratic, anti-democratic. The evil is not only in the plays, but in the acting and the physical arrangement of the playhouse itself. New plays must be written for the masses, plays which they can understand, plays which bring them together as a class and in which they can participate.

Faults of the Theatre.

M. Rolland briefly considers the dramatic masterpieces of the world from Sophocles to the comedies of the boulevard, and finds them, with rare exceptions, unsuited to the people. Even Shakespeare and Schiller are lifeless; they belong to past epochs, and express ideas foreign to the French workingmen of the twentieth century.

The playhouses, too, are built for a society divided into classes; they must be altered to suit the workingmen.

Having tested the plays of the past and found them wanting, M. Rolland set himself the task of supplying plays for his projected people's theatre. He went to the French Revolution and wrote plays which would appeal to the masses. But these plays must also be acted by the people, and M. Rolland proceeded to make the people a character, a great composite crowd, participating as *The People*.

Plays of "the People."

In *July 14*, *The People* are the protagonist, and the taking of the Bastille afforded him ample opportunity for utilizing them. In *Danton* they are rather implied until the last act, while in *The Wolves* and *The Triumph of Reason* they hover in the background and determine the course of events: they are always near at hand, although they do not appear on the stage.

M. Rolland must of course be a confirmed enemy to our star system, and there is, even in the hero play of *Danton*, a fairly even distribution of parts.

The effect is at first somewhat disconcerting, and the plays seem a trifle disconcerting and rambling. There is no conventional plot, and the love interest, as developed in such a play as *Fatherland* (*Patrie*), is conspicuously absent. In its stead there is greater breadth of touch, a solid framework, a broader canvas; and the artist, we instinctively feel, is better able to depict a great movement like the Revolution than if he were confined to raveling and unravelling a plot.

Possibly M. Rolland's ignorance of or disdain for the tricks of the dramatist's trade has lessened the purely dramatic tension of occasional scenes, but, on the other hand, he has drawn characters which Sardou could scarcely have conceived.

Failures on the Stage.

No attempt at dramatic reform, no theory, no ideal—whatever its eventual worth—ought to obscure the fact that all of M. Rolland's plays are unsuccessful from the viewpoint of production. Good reading they undoubtedly make; literature they assuredly are, but they have not pleased audiences for consecutive days, weeks and months.

This does not of necessity damn them, but it should cause us to ask whether or not they belong to that class of hybrids, the closet drama. M. Rolland's first mistake was in writing plays for a hypothetical and practically non-existent public.

France is in many ways an aristocratic country with an aristocratic art; it is but natural, therefore, that all reform should be slower than in younger countries, and M. Rolland in his impatience attempted the impossible. In trying to avoid what was conventional in the French drama, he restricted himself to a more or less formless medium, and the people who saw his plays missed what they were accustomed to see: a well defined story.

What success would have attended his innovations in another country it is hard to say; what success will attend him if he perseveres, seems easier to predict. The last five years have witnessed a profound change in French thought and art, and perhaps Romain Rolland will once more find his faith justified in a new France where the people shall have a theatre of their own. Meantime his ideas have spread to other lands and there borne the fruits he had hoped would flourish in his own beloved France.

NOTE—Mr. Clark's article is part of the preface to a book containing Rolland's plays, *The Fourteenth of July and Danton*, which he has translated and which Henry Holt & Company are publishing.

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